

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5565

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIN, PDIP, PORG, PBOR, PFOR, BG

SUBJECT: TALK WITH BDG FOREIGN SECRETARY

1. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF TOUR D'HORIZON TODAY BETWEEN CHARGE AND BANGLADESH FOREIGN SECRETARY FAKHRUDDIN AHMED COVERING THE FOLLOWING SUBJECT:

- (A) USAID ADMINISTRATOR PARKER'S VISIT;
- (B) FOREIGN SECRETARY'S RECENT TALKS IN NEW DELHI;
- (C) AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S VISIT;
- (D) CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN BANGLADESH;
- (E) PRG REPRESENTATION IN INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS;
- (F) PLO IN DACCA; AND
- (G) PRC REPRESENTATION IN BANGLADESH.

2. USAID ADMINISTRATOR PARKER'S VISIT. AS THE FOREIGN SECRETARY WAS IN NEW DELHI DURING THE VISIT OF USAID ADMINISTRATOR TO BANGLADESH LAST WEEK, CHARGE REITERATED APPRECIATION OF USG FOR BDG'S HOSPITALITY AND COOPERATIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE PARKER/NOOTER PROGRAM. CHARGE ALSO INQUIRED ABOUT BDG'S PRESENT THINKING ON LATEST US OFFER

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OF 150,000 TONS OF RICE UNDER PL-480, TITLE I, STRESSING

THAT USG WOULD LIKE AN EARLY EXCHANGE OF NOTES BECAUSE OF THE CURRENT FAVORABLE RICE MARKET IN THE US AND A POSSIBLE SHORTAGE OF US SHIPPING SPACE IN THE LATE SPRING. FOREIGN SECRETARY HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF STATUS OF THIS OFFER, REFLECTING PERHAPS THE RECURRENT PROBLEM HERE OF POOR COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN FOREIGN MINISTRY AND, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PLANNING COMMISSION.

3. BDG/GOI TALKS ON MARITIME BOUNDARY. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID LAST WEEK'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE INDIANS DEALT LARGELY WITH THE PRINCIPLES BY WHICH EACH SIDE BELIEVED THE BOUNDARY SHOULD BE DRAWN. THE TASK REMAINED FOR THE TECHNICIANS TO TRY TO PUSH THIS ISSUE CLOSER TO AGREEMENT, FOLLOWING WHICH AGREEMENT ON THE LOCATION OF THE BOUNDARY ITSELF WOULD NEED TO BE REACHED. THIS STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO. FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THE QUESTION OF FARAKKAR BARRAGE DID NOT ARISE IN THESE MEETING AND WOULD BE LEFT FOR ANOTHER OCCASION.

4. WHITLAM VISIT. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED REHEARSED THE OFFICIAL SUMMARY OUTLINING THE RESULTS OF THE VISIT (SEE DACCA 0421), AND CONFIRMED REPORTS FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THE BDG HAD HOPED THE AUSTRALIANS WOULD BE MORE LIBERAL AS REGARDS THE TERMS FOR THE 300,000 TONS OF WHEAT ALLEGEDLY EARMARKED FOR BANGLADESH. THE BDG TOLD WHITLAM THAT THEY WOULD HAVE REAL PROBLEMS COPING WITH THESE COMMERCIAL TERMS AND, ACCORDING TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, WHITLAM WILL PURSUE THIS MATTER IN CANBERRA TO SEE IF THERE IS ROOM FOR EASING THE FINANCIAL STRAIN. IN CONTRAST WITH THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER'S COMMENT TO CHARGE THAT THE BALL IS THE BANGLADESH'S COURT, BDG APPEARS SLIGHTLY OPTIMISTIC THAT GOA WILL YIELD A BIT. FOREIGN SECRETARY MADE NO REFERENCE TO REPORTS FROM LOCAL AUSTRALIAN SOURCES THAT WHITLAM MADE STRONGEST PITCH TO MUJIB THAT OIL-RICH ARAB STATES SHOULD SHARE COST OF FEEDING BANGLADESH.

5. CONSITIUTIONAL CHANGES. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY ECHOED CURRENT REPORTS THAT SHEIKH MUJIB WOULD SHORTLY INSTITUTE A PRESIDENTIAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT, BUT PUSHED ASIDE SOME SPECULATION THAT IT WOULD FOLLOW THE TANZANIA MODEL. THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAID THE SHEIKH WOULD NOT WISH TO APPEAR TO BE ESTABLISHING A ONE-PARTY FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND THE LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE WOULD NO PERMIT HIM TO GET AWAY WITH IT. LIKE OTHERS, FAKHRUDDIN RATIONALIZED THESE CHANGES BECAUSE OF THE NEED FOR GREATER ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS AND TO PERMIT THE SHEIKH TO BRING MEN INTO HIS CABINET FROM OUTSIDE THE PARLIAMENT WITH MORE ABILITY AND LESSER POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS. WHILE CLAMING NO KNOWLEDGE OF

THE SHEIKH'S TIMING, HE STRONGLY CONFIRMED THAT THESE CHANGES WERE IMMINENT, PROBABLY BEFORE THIS CURRENT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT ADJOURNED. (SPECULATION ABOUT THE TIMING WAS FANNED A BIT MORE THIS AFTERNOON WITH A PHONE CALL AS THIS MESSAGE WAS DRAFTED THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS CANCELLING HIS DINNER FOR THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY EVENING, JANUARY 25, "OWING TO UNAVOIDABLE CIRCUMSTANCES.")

6. PRG IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. AS INSTRUCTED, THE CHARGE CONVEYED USG VIEWS AGAINST PARTICIPATION OF THE PRG AT THE SECOND SESSION OF CONFERENCE OF LAW OF WAR AND ALSO AT THE SEVENTH WMO CONGRESS. FOREIGN SECRETARY RESPONDED THAT THE USG WAS AWARE OF PRG'S OFFICIAL PRESENCE IN BANGLADESH AND OF BDG'S RECORD ON THIS ISSUE TO DATE. HE SAID BDG WAS INCLINED TO BE GOVERNED BY VIEWS OF OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES AND NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE, BUT AT SAME TIME IT WOULD SEEK TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN CONFERENCES CONCERNED WITH POLITICAL AS AGAINST NON-POLITICAL ISSUES.

7. PLO IN DACCA. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE PLO MIGHT BE ESTABLISHING OFFICES IN DACCA AT AN EARLY DATE, FOREIGN SECRETARY REPLIED THAT THE BDG RECOGNIZES THE PLO AND HAS INFORMED THE LATTER THAT THERE WOULD BE NO OBJECTION IF THEY WISHED TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES IN DACCA. HE CLAIMED, HOWEVER, NOT TO HAVE HEARD ANYTHING TO DATE INDICATING THEIR PRESENT INTENTIONS.

8. PRC REPRESENTATION IN BANGLADESH. REFERRING TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH AT THE PARLIAMENT LAST MONDAY (SEE DACCA 0400), THE CHARGE ASKED ABOUT PROGRESS TOWARD EARLY ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN PRC AND BDG. FOREIGN SECRETARY REPLIED THAT BDG WOULD WELCOME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE PRC IN DACCA TOMORROW. HE REFERRED TO CONTINUING CONTACTS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS IN NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON BUT NOTED THAT PRC WAS PRESUMABLY STILL UNDER SOME CONSTRAINT BECAUSE OF ITS RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN. HE PERSONALLY DOUBTED THAT PRC WOULD WAIT UNTIL GOP/BDG RELATION WERE FULLY NORMALIZED BUT GENERALLY ESTIMATED THAT THERE PROBABLY WERE NO EARLY MOVES IN THE OFFING BY THE PRC.
CHESLAW

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